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Analyzing the aspects of 'Social Reconstruction' in Rohinton Mistry's 'Such a Long Journey'

Abstract: Rohinton Mistry is among the writers who always deal with the social themes and try to bring some sort of change in the current way of society and its people. The present paper concerns the theme of social change with regard to one of the finest works of Indian English Literature Rohinton Mistry's 'Such a Long Journey'. How he used several scenes to change the society is the major subject of this paper. The themes are generally: Corrupt politicians, common people sufferings, casteism, untouchability etc,. So, he is the one who indeed work upon the social change of which we are talking about in this research. We always have some sort of social change in his novels. We may find the evil of superstition in the novel, pretty clearly. Mistry, though was settled in Canada years ago, he never forgets India and its poor social-political condition. Sometimes, we feel that he has been somewhat rude on these politicians, but on the very second minute we too feel that whatever he has presented is reality by which we are suffering since India's Independence.

Key words: Social reconstruction, superstitions, Politics, mindsets, society, corruption

“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.

We have seen the future, and the future is ours”

Cesar Chavez (American Activist and Labor Organizer)

The term ‘Social Reconstruction’ is something that we should have to understand in the contemporary viewpoints. It is a change which can take place in the society by any erratic manner. It is a process of bringing some revolution and renovation in the current way of living. Thus, by and large it is a process which can lead the entire nation, sometimes, to the changeable situation. As in the words of M. K. Gandhi:

First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you.

Then they fight you. Then you win.

The reason behind choosing this study is to examine the impacts of the text and the movie based on it, on society, and how it has managed to bring in some sort of change in the society. We all know that literature is a powerful tool which can influence the society and its people but simultaneously films have also become an important part of the society and they can also play the important role in changing the society.

‘Such a Long Journey’ is a 1991 novel by Rohinton Mistry. It was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and won several other awards. However, it was noticed by number of people when it was withdrawn from the University of Mumbai's English syllabus after the complaints from the family of the Hindu nationalist politician Bal Thackeray. In this light, a celebrated writer Salman Rushdie points out that:

Because of the objection from the local extremists the celebrated novel of Rohinton Mistry, 'Such a Long Journey' was pulled off the syllabus of Mumbai University

Rohinton Mistry's 'Such a Long Journey' is a wonderful novel discussing the position of minority in the Indian society. As far as India is concern, the major religion here is Hinduism and other religions are minor, be it Parsi or Muslim. The life for these people is 'grave' and that is what Mistry tries to showcase in the novel. The novel, set against the backdrop of 1971 Indo-Pak war, involves the tragedy of the main character Gustad, ruining all his hopes by the situations out of his control. Mrs. Priyambda Singh notes:

'Such a Long Journey' is from the writer of Indian Diaspora who inhabited in Canada. It discusses Mistry's huge worry for the Parsis in India as he craves to enlarge this sector of post colonial India.

Mistry is a social novelist in every sense and this element finds an apt expression in this novel. However, his sociality and Maoism come from the entity acquaintance as a Parsi which is minor set of people in India. His situation is like an exterior tool not interior in the Indian society, which is full of 'Hindus'. Avdheshkumar Singh, in this light, examines that,

Like his contemporaries, Mistry talks about his group of people and its past, he tries to extend this population and wishes to enlarge their position by such writing.

Bhattacharjee Papiya inspects the same as she says:

‘Such a Long Journey’ exhibits the microcosm of human life in common and the political disorder in meticulous. He tries to preserve balance in the course of sanguinity and angst, and virtue and vice to mend the racial distinctiveness of his people

The novel is a devout journey of the central character who suffered a lot on account of the situation appeared around him. However what he understood at the end, according to Sudip Sinha is:

We should live our life, live it entirely, abide the troubles all through the voyage of life, keep them within us and go on. This is the course that should be followed in every journey whatever it is a travel journey or a journey of life.

If we take a look at Rohinton Mistry’s novels the common theme we can find are the social and political aspects. Most of his works deal with the political and social background. Moreover, the politics represented in the novel of Mistry is not ‘artificial’ but is very much closer to the real Indian politics. The themes are generally: Corrupt politicians, common people sufferings, casteism, untouchability etc. So, he is the person who indeed works upon the social change of which we are talking about. Though he was settled in Canada years ago, he never forgets India and its poor socio-political condition. The specific object to his criticism is the politicians. Sometimes, we feel that he has been somewhat rude on these politicians, but on the very second minute we too feel that whatever he has presented is reality by which we are suffering since India's Independence.

The novel is set in Bombay, Maharashtra. Though the novel is written by an Indian living in Canada, there is no trace of Canada or Canadian culture, it is strongly Indian in nature however; the novel is a deep concern for the Parsis of India in particular and the post-modern India's development in general. Mistry also condemns Shivsena in the novel. Shivsena in 'Such a Long Journey' is a kind of threat to the Parsi community. Indeed Dinshawji fears that, "Shivsena would not stop till they have complete Maratha Raj with their Marathas for the Maharashtrian nonsense".

Dinshawji also says that Shivsena member called them (Parsi) "Cow Eaters". He also suggests that because of search party the Parsi community lost its value and days will come when no one will think and care of the Parsi community.

Certainly, with Shivsena's emergence the things have changed a great deal. The people of India have been fixed in such a negative dilemma that nothing good is happening for them with all these cultural and religious activities propagandizing one's own religion and does not care for the others'. Surely, Rohinton Mistry throws a deep light into this issue in 'Such a Long Journey' as he tries to criticize such nuances created on the name of religion and god. He wants to 'change' this aspect of Indian society from which we have been suffering since long.

Rohinton Mistry tries to bring some sort of change in the Indian society by his work. In 'Such a Long Journey' he discusses many aspects that are part and partial of the Indian society. It seems that Mistry has no fear of what we call politicians and the so called religious heads. Mistry is very clear about what he wants to write. Being an Indian, he was surrounded by many religious, although he is Parsi and so he was able to Grasp the reality of Indian society. Like we have in a recent movie called 'PK' where the central character tries to find 'god' but he could not simply because Indian society does not have any particular God, on the contrary

it is filled with thousands of gods and it is said that the religion head protects respective gods.

In this movie there is a dialogue:

Koi kehta he nange pair mandir me jao, to kiokehta he jute pehneke church mein. Koi safed pehenke shaadi karta hai to koi safed pehnke mayyat me jaata hai.

[Somebody tells to go to temple removing the shoes and others advice to go to church putting the shoes on. Some people wear white clothes in marriages and other go to funeral wearing white]

Same is the case with Mistry who is Parsi but is involved in all the religions around him thus he has a sound knowledge about all this. He has described parsism as well as Hinduism in this novel and also shown that how people are blind about religion in India. There is a scene in the novel where a street artist who used to draw 'rangoli' with colours, draw Rangoli and someone just walks onto it and the crowd around him start to beat the person because the rangoli is of one of the Indian gods, such is the level of religious people in India. This scene is actually very well written and the reason behind the scene is that we should not commit ill-deeds on the name of religion. All the riots and massacre occurred in India around 1993 are mostly in the name of religion. Hindu vs Muslim, the Sikh riots etc. All are in the name of god and religion. Mistry tries to advocate that we should not fight with one another for such thing. India should be changed, especially in this thing which is actually harming the society and the country.

So, to conclude we may say that Mistry, in his novel 'Such a Long Journey' tries to socialize and to bring some sort of current ways of living of Indian people. He covers so many issues

like superstitions, politics, and backward mindsets of people. However, he is the one who works upon bringing social change, among many others.

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